Little Chiang

When the United Airlines jet landed at Washington Airport last week, General Chiang Ching-kuo walked unnoticed past the waiting reception committee of U.S. officials and Chinese diplomats. It was not until moments later that they spotted him, a chunky man in a nondescript business suit, patiently examining the modernistic interior of the Dulles Terminal Building.

The committee's mistake, and the general's demeanor, were both significant. Though the eldest son of Chiang Kai-shek, Nationalist China's venerable president, Chiang Ching-kuo, 53, is the mystery man of Formosa who avoids the limelight. Partly, the mystery has professional reasons: as chief of Formosa's secret police and head of the guerrilla activities directed against Red China, he naturally seeks the shadows.

Formosan Bestseller. The visit to the U.S., his first in ten years, is said to be without special significance. He conferred with intelligence officials at both the CIA and the Pentagon, discussed the latest estimates of conditions on the Red Chinese mainland. Between conferences, he squeezed in a one-day jet flight to Cape Canaveral. He also had a 75-minute conference with the President and presented him with a copy of *Profiles in Courage* in a Chinese translation, adding that it was a bestseller on Formosa.

Kennedy and top U.S. officials were seeing face to face the man who may well succeed his father as President of Nationalist China. On Formosa, Ching-kuo is known as "Little Chiang," and his only major rival for the top job is Vice President Chen Cheng, who suffers from a liver ailment and has been in semiretirement since June. Born in Chekiang province to the Gimo's first wife, a peasant girl who was later killed in a Japanese bombing raid, Ching-kuo was 16 when the Gimo sent him to Moscow in 1925 "to learn more about revolutionary ideas." He joined the Komsomol and studied guerrilla tactics at a Red army academy. When Chiang Kai-shek broke with the Communists in 1927, a letter over Ching-kuo's name appeared in Pravda denouncing his father as a "traitor." He says the letter was a forgery.

Ching-kuo himself broke with Stalin on the issue of Trotskyism and put in some years of hard work in gold mines and factories. When the Japanese threat forged a new bond between Stalin and the Gimo in 1937, Ching-kuo was permitted to leave for China with his shy, appealing Russian wife Fanina and their son Alan.

Spot & Mop. Overjoyed at his son's return, the Gimo nevertheless thought him too Russian in his outlook and had him tutored for two years to "make him Chinese again." Ever since, Ching-kuo has loyally and efficiently handled a succession of jobs for his father, ranging from operating a concentration camp for Communist suspects on Green Island to creating a system of political commissars to check on loyalty in the army. Under Ching-kuo, Nationalist guerrillas probe the mainland for soft spots in the defenses and public disaffection with the Red regime. Over the past two years, some 1,500 men have been put ashore in Chekiang and Kwangtung provinces. In U.S. opinion, individual saboteurs often complete their missions, but most large raiding parties have been quickly spotted and mopped up by the Red Chinese.

Ching-kuo has repeatedly been accused of engaging in secret talks with Peking, presumably with the object of making a deal after the Gimo's death. Those who know him best scoff at the idea that he would ever hand Formosa over to Peking.

Sino-Marxist Amalgam. With no formal university education, Ching-kuo commands little loyalty among Nationalist China's intellectuals, and his nonconformist methods irritate the top politicians of the Kuomintang. He is backed by his dashing half brother, Major General Chiang Wei-kuo, 47. As minister without portfolio in the Cabinet and special adviser to the President, Ching-kuo works closely with his father. Another source of strength is Ching-kuo's 100,000-man Youth Corps, and his veto power over promotions in the army gives him enormous influence with junior officers.

With his two older children married, Ching-kuo lives in a modest home in Taipei with his wife and two younger sons. His day begins at 6:00 a.m. with an hour's practice in Chinese calligraphy and painting, and continues in his office until midnight. He likes hiking in the mountains, but since suffering from mild diabetes has had to forgo convivial drinking—mostly vodka. One old friend sees Ching-kuo as "an amalgam of the Chinese tradition and Marxist ideas." What strikes most observers is his strange combination of shyness and power. A Chinese friend perhaps put it best when he said, "Look at his hands—there's the man: coarse, tough, patient."

As his trip to Washington neared its end last week, the mystery man met newsmen, who found him seated on a gold-embroidered sofa in the Chinese embassy. Red China, said Ching-kuo through his interpreter, is at its weakest point in history and Formosa correspondingly at its strongest. His visit was intended to bring about "common understanding" between his country and the U.S. Did that mean there were misunderstandings? Ching-kuo replied with a loud "No!" even before the question was translated. With a brisk, "That's all," the interview was concluded, and Ching-kuo drove off to Princeton, N.J., to enjoy the one U.S. experience he had insisted upon—staying at a motel.

CHIANG CHING-KUO & FRIEND
The mystery was partly professional.

RED CHINA

A Very Backward Country

A trained economist had a month-long look at Red China (TIME cover, Sept. 13) and emerged last week with some pertinent conclusions. The man was Raymond Scheyven, 52, Belgium's former Economic Affairs Minister and currently a member of the Belgian Parliament. Scheyven visited Canton, Peking and Shanghai, and a number of industrial centers in northeastern and central China. He was told that cloth rationing would continue for at least five years. Scheyven added that optimists gave China 20 years to catch up with the industrial nations of the West, and pessimists 40 to 50 years. Said Scheyven, "I give it approximately 60 years."